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ABSTRACT

The redesign of a course on German business, taught at the University of Illinois at Chicago, is described. The course, intended for both undergraduate and graduate German majors, initially described and defined German institutions and common business practices and explored differences in historical and cultural backgrounds. Course revision focused on a new component: initiating the student into the German-American business community as their future employer. A speaker series brought in German and American representatives of German companies and American companies in business in German-speaking countries. Field trips provided discussion sessions with employees, trainees, and interns in the German business environment, and highlighted German-American corporate cultures, business styles, and strategies. A workshop offered experience in authentic job/internship interviews. It is felt that as a result of the changes, students have learned strategies for dealing with cross-cultural challenges, student work has become more self-directed, and students have become more confident in their job searches. A copy of the syllabus and grading policy is appended. (MSE)

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German 450: Introduction to Business Operations in Germany Initiating the Integration Process Into the International Business Environment For German Majors At the Undergraduate and Graduate Levels

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University of Illinois at Chicago.

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German 450: Introduction to Business Operations in Germany

Initiating the Integration Process Into the International Business Environment For German Majors At the Undergraduate and Graduate Levels

In 1993 a questionnaire study was conducted at the University of Illinois at Chicago in the German Department at the undergraduate and graduate levels in order to assess students' interests and motivations for declaring a German major. The evaluation of the questionnaires confirmed the hypothesis that the focus of German majors at the undergraduate as well as at the graduate level has undergone great changes in the last few years. Students expressed a preference for "practical" culturally, linguistically, pedagogically, and business-oriented courses in opposition to the traditional "classical literature courses." In addition, students stated as a reason a deep concern in finding a job after graduation in which they are able to apply their linguistic knowledge in German rather than in studying the excellence of the literature of the German-speaking countries. The German Department, however, has not been able so far to offer a "Business German Option" in the B.A. or the M.A. in addition to the regular "Literature Curriculum." Thus, students and also instructors feel that students have a disadvantage in their job search since the program does not prepare students adequately for their future careers. Only two classes, i.e. German 108: Business German (taught in German) and German 450: Introduction to Business

Operations in Germany (taught in English) prepare undergraduate students interested in Business issues of the German-speaking countries for a career in a non-academic setting. On the graduate level, the picture looks even grimmer since there is only one class, i.e. German 450, available. Considering the fact that knowledge about the German language and business culture is more important than ever when it comes to doing business in Europe this selection is rather small. In the presentation, I will be concentrating on the course of German 450.

From discussions with the Head of the German Department, Lee B. Jennings, other faculty members, and from a close examination of the previous syllabi of the course, I concluded that there seemed to be a contradiction. Although the class was offered primarily to help German majors to increase their job marketability, the class focused on a detailed factual knowledge of Business Operations in Germany without integrating the essential component of initiating the students into the German-American business community as their future employer.

Originally, this class had been designed as a survey course for undergraduate as well as graduate students in a lecture setting, describing and defining German institutions as well as business practices, along with the differences in the historical and cultural backgrounds. Since our German Department does not offer a B.A. or a M.A. in German for Business, although students seem to express a strong interest in this area and even plan to pursue a career in the German-American business environment, I decided to redesign the conventional information-centered syllabus

for German majors, the quality of learning and teaching was continuously assessed by applying "Classroom Assessment Techniques = CATs" (according to Thomas A. Angelo and K. Patricia Cross: Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1988; 1993) in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the redesigned course and also in order to use students' feedback as valuable input for future sessions in the same semester and future classes.

Through the Roundtable Speaker Series featuring various German and American representatives from German companies in the US as well as from American companies involved in business with the German-speaking countries and through fieldtrips including discussion sessions with employees, trainees, and interns to German companies, banks, and to the German trade commissioner's office students were initiated into German-American corporate cultures, business styles and strategies. In addition, through the workshop featuring a former head of human resources for a German company and several successful interns for German companies students were provided with first-hand experience and built up students' skills and self-confidence of how to successfully "survive" a German interview for a job/internship. During the semester, constant and continuous classroom assessment techniques adapted to the instructional activities as well as to the subject matter provided a reliable feedback mechanism measuring students' involvement in the learning process and changing needs.

In summary, students were able to meet representatives from German-American companies, had a chance to ask questions, and

explore the German-American business environments on their own within the frame work of German 450. In addition, the majority of students developed an effective way to overcome cross-cultural challenges through the "training sessions" to avoid disastrous pitfalls and developed skills and strategies in order to find an internship or a job with a German-American company. As a result, students became more self-directed in their studies and confident in their search for a position in the German-American business community after graduating in the "Humanities."

Through increased interactive involvement and specific cross-cultural background learning, an overall positive experience with the revised German 450 class on the students' as well as the instructor's part was created since individual students became more self-directed and self-confident and faster initiated into the environment of German-American business.

[Examples of student's assessments to follow.]

APPENDIX

COPY OF SYLLABUS USED IN GERMAN 450 IN THE FALL SEMESTER OF 1993 (TO BE REVISED)

GERMAN 450:
INTRODUCTION TO BUSINESS OPERATIONS IN GERMANY
FALL 1993

Prof. C.A. Becker
UH 1506
W 3-6 UH 1550
OH: M 12-1; F 1-2
and by appointment

SCOPE:

Germany's cultural, economic and political changes are creating significant opportunities for American business. This class will offer to students important background information on relevant geographical, historical, economic, social as well as business issues in Germany and in the German-American business environments. In addition, strategies for a smoother crossing of differences between the United States and Germany are developed.

PRELIMINARY VERSION OF SYLLABUS

08/25 (1): **INTRODUCTION:**
THE CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT OF INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS:
The Challenges of International Business in the 1990s:
- National Culture
- Business Culture
- Corporate Culture

09/01 (2): **MEET UNITED GERMANY I:**
Introduction
Geography
History
Travel Notes: Transportation & Local Contacts

09/08 (3): **MEET THE GERMAN PEOPLE I:**
Population, Language
Educational System

Fieldtrip to the German Cultural Center at the Goethe Institut, Chicago
Question-and-Answer Session with Elisabeth Angele, Librarian and a representative from the Language Center

09/15 (4): **MEET THE GERMAN PEOPLE II:**
The Corporate Apprenticeship
Internship in a German-American Company/Institution

Question-and-Answer Session with Intern Diplom-Kauffrau Heike Zanzen and Marketing Director Mike Hemmer from the German-American Chamber of Commerce, Chicago

09/22 (5): THE BUSINESS OF GERMAN BUSINESS I:
The Handelskammern
Fieldtrip to the German-American Chamber of Commerce, Chicago

Question-and-Answer Session with Managing Director Niels G. Friedrichs

09/29 (6): INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATION of students' projects on self-selected various aspects of German national, business, and/or corporate culture

"Lebenslauf" and "Bewerbungsbrief"

Question-and-Answer Session with Mr. Armajani, Sales Manager of Lufthansa

10/06 (7): THE BUSINESS OF GERMAN BUSINESS II:
Lifestyle: Family, Leisure, Dining
Customs & Courtesies
Business Protocol & Procedures
Tips

Question-and-Answer Session with Cross-Cultural Consultant Detlef Koska, Principal of A.T. Kearney & Assoc., Chicago, Dr. Fred Koestler, VP for Human Resources, and Jennifer Henne, International Coordinator, Robert Bosch Corporation, Chicago

10/13 (8): MEET UNITED GERMANY II:
Government/Economy
East Germany & The Treuhandanstalt
Individual Presentations on the "Länder"
The Mittelstand

Mini-Workshop: Successful Interviewing for A Job/Internship in the German-American Business Environment

10/20 (9): THE BUSINESS OF GERMAN BUSINESS III:
The Style and Substance of German Management
The Mittelstand
The Corporate Apprenticeship
German Corporate Power: Committee, Consensus, Council

Question-and-Answer Session with Axel Mees, VP and General Manager of BMW of North America, Inc.

10/27 (10): THE BUSINESS OF GERMAN BUSINESS IV:

Germany's Universal Banking System

Question-and-Answer Session with
Klaus Bruewer, Director of Deutsche Bank, Chicago

11/03 (11): SMOOTH CROSSING OF BOUNDARIES:
Preliminary Presentation of Final Group Projects on Creating Opportunities for American Business in Germany

11/10 (12): THE FUTURE OF GERMAN BUSINESS:
The EC
The World

Question-and Answer-Session with
Christoph Sander, Deputy Consular General of the Federal Republic of Germany

11/17 (13): GERMANY vs. US:
CONCLUSIONS: Comparison of Cultural Patterns on the National, Business, and Corporate Levels

11/24 (14): PRESENTATION OF FINAL PROJECTS (1)

12/01 (15): PRESENTATION OF FINAL PROJECTS (2)

REQUIREMENTS:

1) Assigned readings of selected texts from:

Ardagh, John. Germany and the Germans: After Unification: New Revised Edition. London: Penguin 1991.

Facts about Germany: The Federal Republic of Germany. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1992.

Foster, Dean Allen. Bargaining Across Borders: How to Negotiate Business Successfully Anywhere In the World. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992.

German Brief 1993. (Published weekly by the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung GmbH Information Services).

Glouchevitch, Philip. Juggernaut: The German Way of Business: Why It Is Transforming Europe - and the World. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992.

Hall, Edward T. The Hidden Dimension. New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1982.

Hall, Edward T. and Mildred Reed Hall. Understanding Cultural

Differences: Keys to Success in West Germany, France, and the United States. Yarmouth: Intercultural Press, 1990.

Meet United Germany: Handbook 1992/93/Perspectives. Frankfurt am Main: Atlantikbrücke, 1992.

Terpstra, Vern and Kenneth David. The Cultural Environment of International Business. Cincinnati: Souyh-Western Publishing Co., 1991.

These Strange German Ways. Bonn: Atlantikbrücke, 1991.

Thurow, Lester. Head to Head: The Coming Economic Battle Among Japan, Europe, and America. New York: Morrow, 1992.

2) Active Class Participation;

3) Individual Oral Presentation;

4) Final Project (Preliminary version, written and oral final version).

GRADING POLICY:

The final grade is calculated as follows:

- Attendance and active class participation (including Question-and-Answer sessions with Speakers):	40%
- Homework and other Reading Assignments:	20%
- Individual Oral Presentation:	10%
- Final Project:	30%
Preliminary presentation	10%
Final written version	10%
Final oral presentation	10%
Total:	100%

GRADING SCALE:

100%-90%: A
89%-80%: B
79%-70%: C
69%-60%: D
59%-0%: F